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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 OMB-01 ACDA-07 IO-13 EB-08 FMC-01 DOTE-00
/098 W
----------291145Z 107915 /20
R 290611Z JAN 77
FM USINT BAGHDAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4082
INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
USCINCEUR
COMIDEASTFOR

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 0174

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, IZ, KU
SUBJECT: IRAQI CLAIM OF TWO ISLANDS

REF: (A) KUWAIT 5779 (NOTAL), (B) KUWAIT 5961 (NOTAL).

1. USINT OFFICERS HAVE HAD RECENT CONVERSATION WITH IRAQI AND FOREIGN DIPLOMATIC SOURCES WHICH MAY SHED SOME LIGHT ON IRAQI MOTIVES IN RESURFACING CLAIM TO WARBA AND BUBIYAN. AN IRAQI WITH GOOD CONTACTS IN GOI TELLS US THAT GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO FEEL THAT ISLANDS POSE LONG RANGE THREAT TO IRAQI SHIPPING LANES TO UMM QASR WHICH THEY COMMAND. GOI FEELS THAT IT HAS BEEN ACTIVE AND REASONABLE IN OFFERING INDUCEMENTS, SUCH AS ACCESS TO IRAQI WATER AND RAILROAD LINE, WHICH WOULD ENABLE KUWAIT TO MAKE A FACE SAVING COMPROMISE. NONETHELESS, GOK CONTINUES TO AVOID ANY DISCUSSION. WHILE KUWAITI FEAR OF IRAQI MOTIVES IS NORMAL AND UNDERSTANDABLE TO IRAQIS,
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GOK SHOULD BE AWARE THAT IRAQ HAS ASSETS WITHIN KUWAIT WHICH IT CAN EMPLOY TO PUT PRESSURE ON GOK IF IT IS NOT WILLING TO ACCOMMODATE IRAQI OBJECTIVE OF SECURING CONTROL OVER WARBA, NORTHERN BUBIYAN AND A COASTAL STRIP. SOURCE DISMISSED NOTION THAT THERE ANY PARTICULAR REASON FOR TIMING OF LATEST IRAQI MOVE. IT IS SIMPLY A MATTER OF IRAQI

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DETERMINATION NOT TO LET KUWAIT IGNORE A MATTER
VITAL TO IRAQ, PENDING THE APPROPRIATE TIME FOR A
FINAL SETTLEMENT OF THE ISSUE.

2. BRITISH DIPLOMAT WITH LONG SERVICE IN IRAQ
BELIEVES THAT, WHILE IRAQI MOTIVES ARE HARD TO
FATHOM, GOK MAY WELL HAVE OVERREACTED TO WHAT SEEMS
TO HAVE BEEN A RESTATEMENT, PROMPTED BY A JOURNA-
LIST'S QUESTION, OF LONG STANDING IRAQI POSITION.
THIS SOURCE DOUBTS THAT KUWAITI BORDER QUESTIONS ARE
VERY HIGH ON IRAQI AGENDA, GIVEN THEIR PREOCCUPATION
WITH SYRIA AND KURDISH QUESTIONS. INDEED, HE IS
SCEPTICAL THAT IRAQI TROOPS ARE STILL IN POSITIONS
ACROSS THE KUWAITI BORDER. (A KNOWLEDGEABLE ARAB
DIPLOMAT, HOWEVER, ACCEPTS VIEW THAT IRAQI TROOPS
ARE IN KUWAIT AND IN CLOSE PROXIMITY WITH
KUWAIT FORCES.) THE BRITISH DIPLOMAT ALSO
OBSERVES THAT THE GOK SHOULD FIND SOME CONSOLATION
IN FACT THAT IRAQIS HAVE PROPOSED LEASING THE ISLANDS
WHICH WOULD SEEM TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THE LESSOR,
KUWAIT, ENJOYS SOVEREIGNTY. HE DISMISSED OUR
SUGGESTION THAT IRAQ'S ESCALATION OF BORDER TENSION
MIGHT HAVE BEEN A WARNING AGAINST CLOSER KUWAITI
TIES WITH SAUDI ARABIA, STATING THAT THIS WOULD
BE TOO SUBTLE AND OUT OF CHARACTER FOR THE
NORMALLY BLUNT AND STRAIGHTFORWARD IRAQIS.

3. COMMENT: USINT WOULD APPRECIATE ANY RECENT
INFORMATION ADDRESSEES MAY HAVE ON DISPOSITION OF
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IRAQI TROOPS IN KUWAITI TERRITORY. WE WOULD AGREE
THAT KUWAITI BORDER QUESTION IS NOT A TOP PRIORITY
WITH GOI AND WE ARE STRICK BY THE ABSENCE FROM
IRAQI MEDIA OF ANY DIATRIBES AGAINST KUWAIT IN
CONTRAST TO THE HARSH TONES OF IRAQI DISCUSSION OF
SAUDI OIL POLICY, SYRO-LEBANESE AFFAIRS, OR THE
ARAB-ISRAELI ISSUE. ON THE OTHER HAND, GOI SEEMS
DETERMINED TO IMPROVE THE SECURITY OF ITS
SHIPPING LANES TO UMM QASR AND WE DOUBT THAT GOI
WILL LET THIS ISSUE DISAPPEAR UNLESS KUWAITIS TAKE
SOME STEPS TO SATISFY IRAQI CONCERNS. IN LIGHT OF
THE WIDESPREAD BELIEF IN IRAQ THAT ALL OF KUWAIT
IS PROPERLY A PART OF IRAQ AND THAT ENTIRE COUNTRY
OF KUWAIT WAS ARBITRARILY SEVERED FROM THE IRAQI
HOMELAND BY THE IMPERIALIST POWERS, IT MIGHT BE
PRUDENT FOR THE KUWAITIS TO SHOW SOME FLEXIBILITY
ON THE QUESTION OF SECURITY FOR THE SHIPPING LANES
LEST THIS ISSUE BE USED SOME DAY BY THE IRAQIS AS A PRETEXT
FOR MORE SERIOUS TERRITORIAL AMBITIONS.

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